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ABSTRACT

As part of the Final Report of the National Study of American Indian Education, this paper explores and compares the background of the rural Lumbee Indian with the urban Lumbee living in Pembroke, North Carolina. An interpretation for defining the American Indian in the tri-ethnic community is included, as well as a discussion of the economics of Robeson County as related to job availability. A comparison of the city education system of Pembroke and the rural Magnolia School of Robeson County concludes this report. The appendix is a statistical analysis of data on Robeson County gathered from the Robeson County Health Department in December of 1967. (LS)

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NATIONAL STUDY OF AMERICAN INDIAN EDUCATION

PROJECT OEC-0-8-080147-2805

FINAL REPORT

Community Background Reports

Series I

No. 1

Robeson County, North Carolina

Lumbee Indians

By John Gregory Peck
North Carolina State
University
August, 1969

RC004339

NATIONAL STUDY OF AMERICAN INDIAN EDUCATION

The attached paper is one of a number which make up the Final Report of the National Study of American Indian Education.

This Study was conducted in 1968-69-70 with the aid of a grant from the United States Office of Education, OEC-0-8-080147-2805.

The Final Report consists of five Series of Papers:

I. Community Backgrounds of Education in the Communities Which Have Been Studied.

II. The Education of Indians in Urban Centers.

III. Assorted Papers on Indian Education--mainly technical papers of a research nature.

IV. The Education of American Indians--Substantive Papers.

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INTRODUCTION

There are four tribally organized groups of Indians living in the southeastern United States. These are the Seminole and the Miccosukee of Florida, the Choctaw of Mississippi, and the Eastern Cherokee of North Carolina. Together these four groups number something under ten thousand individuals. They occupy federally supervised Reservation lands in the three states, and attend local Bureau of Indian Affairs schools. In addition to these BIA-supervised Indians, there are between 50,000 and 100,000 non-tribally-organized, non-reservation Indians living in the southeastern coastal plains area running from Maryland to Florida.

The largest of these groups of non-reservation Indians are the Lumbee of North Carolina. There are approximately 30,000 Lumbee living in Robeson County, North Carolina, and estimates are that an additional ten to fifteen thousand reside in the surrounding counties of North and South Carolina. These estimates are difficult to verify because census figures vary from time to time (see 1960 census vs. 1950 census vs. 1940 census for the state of North Carolina) and from place to place (see Virginia and South Carolina figures for the same periods).

The Indian status and Indian identity of non-reservation Indians has been open to a variety of interpretations for some time, and there is not universal agreement between branches of the Federal Government over just who qualifies. The Bureau of the Census accepts as Indian anyone who is so regarded in his own community, i.e. a social definition. In addition, by use of a self-declaration of race in the 1960 census, they have in effect made it not only a social but a personal definition as well. An Indian, at least as far as census figures are concerned, is anyone who chooses to call himself an Indian, and who is so accepted by his neighbors.

It is within the context of this social definition, rather than either a genetic or genealogical definition, that I will treat the Lumbee Indians throughout the rest of this paper. It should perhaps be pointed out that the Congress of the United States, in 1965, gave recognition to the Lumbees' Indian status as falling within the framework of the current definition of who is an American Indian, while specifically excluding them from any benefits and claims against the Federal Government because of their Indian status.

The origins and early history of the Lumbees are unknown. There are reports of Indians who spoke an archaic form of English, who lived in houses, were farmers, and held slaves living along the banks of the Lumber River when the Scotch and English first started to settle the area in the 1730's. The first census of 1790 lists families with many of the surnames of the present Lumbees, who inhabited the areas they inhabit today. Land grants were issued in 1694 to Robert Lowery, and in 1732 jointly to a Henry Berry and a James Lowery in the area of Robeson County. These are Lumbee names of long standing and, indeed, the name of their most honored folk-hero, a sort of Robin Hood from the Civil War, is named Henry Berry Lowery and claimed descent from the two families.

Some credence is given in the Carolinas--and indeed, by the United States Senate--to the possibility that the present-day Indian population of Robeson County represents descendents of an Indian-White mixture of the Raleigh "Lost Colony" which landed on the coast of North Carolina in the area of Cape Hatteras in 1585, and the Hattaras Indians. While much of the plausibility may be based on a lack of tangible alternative evidence, there do remain to support this hypothesis two facts: that the Lumbee, when first recorded, spoke English and lived in European-style houses; and that of the 95 different surnames among the 117 colonists, 41 appear among the Lumbee Indians living in Robeson County.

In any event, it would seem that the Lumbee do represent remnants of Southeastern Atlantic Coast tribes who early in the history of our country drifted into the backwaters and swamps of the Lumber River drainage basin, and while intermarrying somewhat with Whites and Negros, kept their social identity as Indians. This hypothesis is supported by the blood-group work done by Politzer and others, which indicates that the present population has a tri-racial origin.

Phenotypically the Lumbee are highly varied and given individuals can reflect any of the three racial groups that go into their background. This variability can be reflected in individual family groups, where siblings may range from blonde-and-blue eyed to dark skinned, brown-eyed and dark, curly haired.

The Lumbee Indians have held a separate legal status with respect to education in North Carolina for well over eighty years. They have had their own public school system in Robeson County since 1885 and their own college since 1887. Their present system, while no longer legally separate, still maintains a high degree of racial uniformity. The college has been integrated, and has become predominantly a White institution.

THE LOCALITY OF THE STUDY

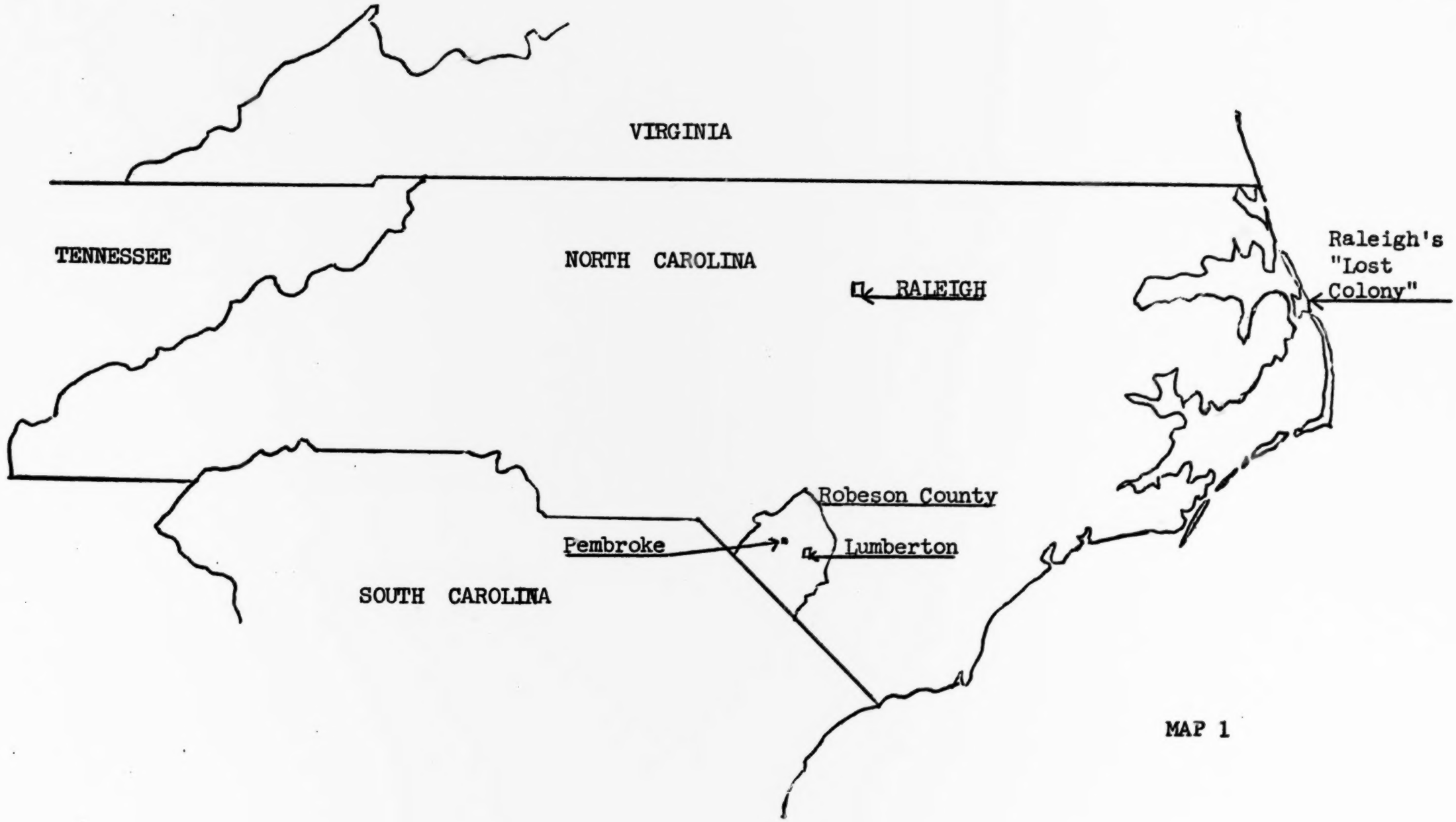
Robeson County is located in the southeastern corner of North Carolina, on the North Carolina-South Carolina border, a hundred miles or so in from the Atlantic coast (Map 1). The county, situated in the coastal plains area of the state, is flat, with sandy soil. It is in the drainage basin of the Lumber River and much of the area of the county is, or formerly was, swampland. Many of the place-names, such as "Long Swamp," "Bear Swamp," "Drowning Creek," "Juniper Branch" and "Hog Swamp" remind us of this. To be productive, much of the farmland has to be drained by ditches six feet deep. While Robeson County is one of the largest counties in the state it is one of the poorest in per capita income, and is predominantly rural (see Appendix for statistics on Robeson County).

The largest town in the county, and the County Seat, is Lumberton, with approximately 15,000 residents. It is situated in the eastern part of the county. Fifteen miles due west of Lumberton is Pembroke Township andthe town of Pembroke, the main residential center for the Lumbee Indians andthe site of Pembroke State University, formerly Pembroke Normal School for Indians. The public schools in Pembroke represented half of our Robeson County sample. The other half of our sample was drawn from the Magnolia School, a consolidated school located ten miles north of Lumberton in an undeveloped rural section of the county.

Robeson County is a tri-ethnic county. Its population is almost equally divided between Negros, Whites and Indians. The Whites live predominantly in the town of Lumberton, St. Pauls, Red Springs and Fairmont. Negroes tend to be dispersed throughout the rural areas of the county, and to concentrate in the towns and townships surrounding them. The Indians are most heavily concentrated in Pembroke township and the town of Pembroke, with secondary concentrations in Lumberton.

Primary sources of income in Robeson County are from farming and from wage labor in one of the few manufacturing plants around Lumberton. It is a poor county, ranking 80th out of 100 North Carolina counties. Per capita income for 1960 was $1,105, the median family income was $2,247, and 65% of Indian families had an income under $3,000 per year.

The main crops in Robeson County are tobacco, corn and cotton. Robeson was the leading producer in the Border Belt marketing area, with 41,887,000 pounds of tobacco in 1964. Tobacco sells at auction for about seventy cents a pound. Robeson is the state's leading cotton producer, with one-eighth of the total. It has the second heaviest concentration of corn acreage in the state. Minor crops are soybeans, peanuts, hogs, cattle, and poultry.


VIRGINIA
TENNESSEE
NORTH CAROLINA
RALEIGH
Raleigh's
"Lost
Colony"
Robeson County
Pembroke
Lumberton
SOUTH CAROLINA

MAP 1

Factory employment is non-union for the most part, and is limited to a textile mill in the north of the county, to the new (1968) B. F. Goodrich plant which manufactures tennis shoes near Lumberton and to a number of very small job-shop plants. North Carolina currently ranks at the bottom of all states in per-hour wages from manufacturing and Robeson County ranks toward the bottom within the state.

One of the local bank presidents estimates that there are between 30 and 40 millionaires in the county.

Indians are given preference over Negroes and Whites as tenant farmers. Eighty per cent of the farming in the county is done by Indians, and almost 60% of the farms, which average around 50 acres each, are tenant-farmed. It is an area with a high rate of seasonally-employed agricultural workers.

Tobacco, the main cash crop, requires intensive cultivation of small acreage allotments, and its net-per-acre earnings can exceed $1,000 in a good year. Labor requirements in the production of tobacco are highest in late spring--April and May--when the tobacco plants, then about four inches high, must be "set in" or transplanted to the fields from their seed beds, and again in the last days of July, and in August and September, when the mature plants must be "stripped" or have the leaves taken off the stalks, and then the leaves must be tied and put on six-foot strips of wood for the "curing" or drying process before the tobacco is taken to market.

While much of the farming in Robeson County has become mechanized in the last 20 years, and while both corn and cotton can be mechanically harvested, the harvesting of tobacco remains a hand operation. Requirements for day laborers is therefore seasonally high. Wages for skilled tobacco field workers range from $1.50 to $2.50 per hour, and in season if the weather is good, a man may put in six or seven consecutive twelve- to fourteen-hour days per week, for several weeks. Women are used mostly in the sorting and tieing of the leaves prior to drying.

Another major source of income for the Indian community is their employment as school personnel in the Robeson County Public School system. The county system is essentially bi-racial in its staffing as well as in its student body. Approximately 60% of the students, teachers and administrators are drawn from the Indian community, with the balance of the student body mostly from the Negro community. Predominantly Negro schools are staffed predominantly by Negro teachers. Most White students in the county attend one of the four city school systems which are not a part of the county system. Thus children are taught, by and large, in racially homogeneous settings by teachers of their own race and from their own communities.

This history of segregated schools for the Indians has probably been one of the most influential factors in the last fifty years contributing to their acculturation to the contemporary American life-way. Prior to 1835, Indians had attended school with Whites. From 1835 to 1885, they were denied admission to the White schools and refused to attend the Negro schools. In 1885, by act of the State Legislature, separate Indian schools were established, and in 1887 a Normal School was set up in Pembroke for the Indians.

The North Carolina pattern of minority education was a pattern of separatism as well as segregation. Negro, White and Indian schools had Negro, White and Indian teachers, principals and other administrators, respectively, even though the local school board and superintendent usually were White. In recent years, however, even this has been changed and there is presently an Indian as well as a Negro school board member.

Whatever the detrimental aspects of segregated education may have been, it did provide one significant advantage to the Indian community--it gave them a monopoly on a group of jobs that paid regularly, were secure, and which rewarded individuals who achieved higher education. It was also a group of jobs that did not deny the holders the ability to continue in the agricultural tradition of the area, if they wished. They could be teachers <u>and</u> farmers.

The importance of this job monopoly is perhaps easier to understand when one realizes that small, one or two crop farming may provide an excellent subsistence base for a farmer, but it provides an unsteady and unpredictable cash base. Farm size in Robeson County averages about 50 acres, and most small farmers must borrow against their future crops to get through the winter and spring.

For the skilled day laborer in farming, tobacco, corn and cotton provide good wages for the area for a part of the year, but it provides no wages for the rest of the year and there are few if any supplemental sources of work or income available to him. As a consequence, both farmer and farm laborer are <u>under</u> employed rather than unemployed--over 45% of the able-bodied work force worked less than 40 weeks in a year--and so life tends to run from one harvest to another.

Under these circumstances, a regular monthly income means that one's whole purchasing and planning strategy can change. With a steady income apart from farming, an individual can make a time-purchase with the expectation of making regular monthly payments. With a job and a paycheck secure from the vagaries of rain and hail and frost, he can contract to buy a house or a

car or a piece of land with the reasonable expectation that it will some day be his, free and clear. And perhaps most important of all, with a group of good jobs predictably available in one's own community, for those Indians who can complete a college program, the investment in the education of a child seems meaningful to make, with real chances of a "payoff."

There has developed over the last fifty years a solid middle-class community of Indians living in and around Pembroke, North Carolina. Most of them are teachers in the county system, but an increasingly large number are in other occupations--a doctor, a real estate broker and insurance man, several store owners, restaurant owners, and gasoline station owners, a few public officials, a university president and several faculty members, a state employee or two--the range of white-collar business and professionals to be found in almost any small southern college town.

These positions have tended to run along family lines over the years. It is ot unusual to find father, son and daughter, all teachers, and perhaps all teachers at the same school. The Lumbee Indian family tends to be strongly male-oriented, and public school teaching even in primary grades is a high-prestige job for men. One consequence of this is that the school system tends to get above-average members of the community for its teachers, and students are taught by predominantly male teachers from as early as the fourth grade.

There is an Indian county-wide organization called the Schoolmasters' Association, which holds regular monthly dinner meetings. Its members include all Indian men in the schools. It provides an opportunity for casual social intercourse along vertical lines as well as horizontal lines within the school power structure and helps maintain a high level of morale. There is no comparable organization for the female members of the county schools.

Formal organizations among the Indians in Robeson County tend to be of two sorts: church-oriented and businessmen-oriented. There are approximately ninety churches serving the Robeson County Indian community. These are predominantly Baptist-oriented (45) and fundamentalist churches such as Pentecostal Holiness, Churches of God, and Gospel Halls among the Brethren. Many of them have local Indian ministers. Investment in church property by the Indians is estimated to be in excess of three quarters of a million dollars. The churches provide much of the social life for the youngsters as well as for the older people.

The formal organizations for business and professional people include a Kiwanis Club, a Junior Chamber of Commerce, and a Lions Club, all located in the town of Pembroke and all overwhelmingly Indian in membership.

Less formal organizations include a Tops Club, i.e. a weight-losing club for women, and a series of specialized organizations like Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, a Rifle Club, and various farm organizations. On an informal-social level, "Sweet Sixteen" parties for young girls, wedding and baby showers, anniversary get-togethers, and the normal run of social events that one would expect in a small southern town seem to occur in Pembroke with a fair amount of regularity.

Housing in the county, and particularly in Pembroke and Pembroke Township is surprisingly modern and in good shape. The 1960 census for the Town of Pembroke listed, of a total of 360 residences, 243 as "sound," 95 as "deteriorating," and only 22 as "dilapidated." Average number of rooms was 5.3, and there were only seven vacant houses in the town.

Things have gotten better for the Indians in Robeson County since 1960. A residential housing development is being built (privately) to the east of town. When you drive down a country road, brick homes less than ten years old seem to be springing up everywhere, along with new mobile homes with landscaped lots, flowers, and new or nearly-new cars in their driveways.

This is not to say that poverty does not exist, or that everyone lives in a seventeen-thousand-dollar home. There are still a number of dilapidated houses around, but increasingly they are being used for storage of tobacco, or simply abandoned. There are still many share-cropper houses, back off the roads, but their numbers and occupancy are decreasing, and the unmistakable impression that you get is that things <u>are</u> getting better for the Lumbee. Prosperity, even if a bit late, is finally coming to at least some of the people.

THE COMMUNITIES IN THE STUDY

The National Study of American Indian Education focused on two sites in the county's school system: the town and township of Pembroke, and the Magnolia Union School, located about fifteen miles to the north and east of Pembroke.

Pembroke is probably the largest Indian settlement east of the Mississippi River. Figures from the 1960 census indicate that for the township's 5,043 residents, there are 313 Whites, 156 Negroes and 4,574 Indians. For the town itself, the census lists 231 Whites, 39 Negroes and 1,102 Indians for a total town population of 1,372. Most of the Whites who live there are associated with the university. The Negroes are mostly day laborers.

Pembroke is at the crossroads of two railroads, one running north-south, the other running from the west to the coast (Map II). It is also at the crossroads of two state roads that parallel the railroads. Over the last fifty years the center of town has moved from the railroad station (located on First Street) to the crossroads (located on Third Street). The business district is located between these two intersections and extends westward along the highway five blocks to the university.

Pembroke has a mayor and city council form of government, its own police force and Fire Department, a small jail and a City Clerk's Office, as well as sewer and water facilities. There is no hotel or motel, but there are several roominghouses (usually filled with students) and several local residents are considering construction of a small motel in the area of the university.

Commercial businesses include several grocery stores, hardware stores, drug stores, general merchandise stores, and specialty stores such as a printing shop, a liquor store (there is none in Lumberton, hence the Whites have to come to the Indians for their "fire water"), a furniture repair store, and a feed and grain outlet. There are approximately 30 commercial establishments in town, almost all of them owned and run by Lumbees.

Pembroke is also the site of Pembroke State University, formerly called Pembroke State College for Indians. The school was established in 1887 by the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina for the education of teachers of the Croatan (Lumbee) race of North Carolina. In the late 1950's it was integrated as a result of the U. S. Supreme Court's desegregation decision, and White students were admitted. Desegregation occurred concurrently with a rapid expansion in college attendance generally in North Carolina's White population. In the last ten years Pembroke State has grown from an institution of 300 Indian students to one of over 1,600 students, about 300 of whom are Indian.

Pembroke is also the location of a grammar school, a junior high school, and a high school. The grammar and junior high schools are located within a block of the university campus. They are both older buildings, in good repair, which have been supplemented by prefabricated temporary classrooms on the school grounds. This has restricted the play areas available to the children. Lunch rooms are available in both schools (both schools bus a number of their children) and a hot meal is served at noon. Class size averages about 20 pupils in the early primary grades (there are no kindergardens in the school system) and about 30 in the upper grades. Some Teacher Aides are used, mostly in the primary grades, and additional educational facilities such as school libraries, a county school system library and audio-visual library are available, as well as specially trained teachers for

PEMBROKE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

NORTH

PEMBROKE JUNIOR HIGH

PEMBROKE STATE UNIV.

DOWNTOWN PEMBROKE

PEMBROKE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

MAP 2

art and music and remedial speech and reading.

The high school, new as of 1969, is located in a semi-rural area approximately one mile southwest from the center of town and about half a mile from the university. It is a modern complex of buildings, built at a cost of over a million dollars. Built for an enrollment of over a thousand students, it currently houses about 600 Indian students in grades 9 through 12.

Racially, the high school student body is composed of two Negroes, about 20 Whites, and the balance Indians. The faculty is also predominantly Indian, as are the administrative staff. College preparatory, technical and distributive education curricula are offered. Excellent cafeteria meals are available at noon, and a brand new physical education area adjoins the school. It is one of the newest and best schools in the county.

Not all the children in the Pembroke area attend the county school system. Several of the White faculty members at Pembroke University prefer to send their children to private or public schools outside of the area, and a few Indians send their children fifteen miles to Lumberton to a parochial school, "so that they can be in a more integrated situation."

Most of the Indian school personnel who work in the county system live in Pembroke and commute to their jobs daily, often in car pools. Their children usually attend the Pembroke schools. These schools, then, draw from the best educated and highest socio-economic levels of the Lumbee.

The Magnolia School is located north of Lumberton just off Interstate 95, part of the New York and Boston to Florida middle-class migration route. It is not really located in a <u>community</u> as such, but in an <u>area</u>. It is a consolidated school covering grades one through twelve. North Carolina does not yet provide kindergartens in its school systems.

The area around Magnolia is still rural farmland, with some strip development beginning at the I-95 intersection. The school draws its students, all Indian, from the farms and cross-roads settlements around it, and from the town of Lumberton two miles to the south and east. The school is currently under suit by HEW for bringing Indian students out of the Lumberton City school district and concurrently bussing White students from the county school district into the Lumberton City schools.

The Indian students attending Magnolia, on the average, come from homes and backgrounds less prosperous than those in Pembroke. Many of the parents are tenant farmers or day laborers. Educational level among them is below that of Pembroke parents, and few are professional or white-collar workers. One-parent homes

are a more frequent occurrence among the Magnolia students, and a number of the children live with someone other than their natural parents. This is considered one of the poorer sections of the county.

Magnolia School is a complex of three sets of older buildings--one set housing the early primary grades, a second set housing the 4th through 8th, and a third set for the senior high school students, the administrative offices, the lunch room, and the library. There are a number of temporary prefabricated classroom buildings around the complex, used for additional primary classrooms and for special education classes. Playground and outdoor sports equipment is at a minimum, but there is a gymnasium, the newest building in the complex. Housing has been provided on the school grounds for a caretaker. Teacher aides are used effectively, and the school provides a moderate amount of extra-curricular activity such as a student newspaper, occasional dances, and a full sports program. One of the main drawbacks to increased use of the school after regular school hours is that almost all of the children are bussed.

The overall impression that one gets when looking at Magnolia and at Pembroke is that they are dealing with two different groups of people, from a number of aspects. Pembroke is, and has been for two or more generations, a center of learning and the center of economic life for the Lumbee. Those who have come to settle there constitute a middle and upper-middle class, in economic terms as well as in their values and attitudes. The people around Magnolia as a group have had slightly less formal education, and at the same time are both more rural and more urban than the Pembroke residents. More of the Lumbee migrants to the East Baltimore Street area in Baltimore seem to have attended Magnolia rather than Pembroke, and many of them have lived in or around Lumberton, yet their ties are to the land, to the freedom and independence of the day laborer who may work for you today but is his own boss tomorrow, and to the ideal that, whatever the housing in Baltimore may be like, a <u>good</u> house is a brick home in their North Carolina countryside.

APPENDIX

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF ROBESON COUNTY*

I. Population, 1960

Total Urban	Total Rural	County
28,415	61,629	89,629

White	Indian	Negro
36,552	26,316	26,256

59% Non-white

A. Outmigration, 1950-60

Whites	Non-whites	Young Adults
16.2	20.1	36.9

B. Birth-rate

North Carolina	Robeson County
23.5 per 1,000	28.7 per 1,000

C. Median Age

25.5	19.4

47.8% of population is under 18 years of age

D. Members per household (rural) average

White	Non-white
3.73	5.79

II. Income

A. Average per capita - $1,105 per year

B. Median family - $2,247 per year

C. Family Income under $3,000 per year (Ranks 80th in 100 counties of North Carolina)

Whites	Indians	Negroes
30-35%	65%	90%

D. Yet bank president estimates 30-40 millionaires in county.

III. Housing

A. Ranks 98th in 100 counties in number of persons per room.

B. 52% of all houses have no flush toilets.

C. 65.9% are considered substandard.

D. Only 10% of non-white rural housing is considered sound.

IV. Health

A. Infant mortality - 40.0 per 1,000 for 5 year period (1958-1962).

B. Illegitimacy - 15.1 of every 100 births (1961).

Illegitimate Births per 10,000 Population

Whites	Non-whites
28.3	203.0

(Ranks 7th in state in number of illegitimate births)

*Source: Robeson County Health Department, December 1967.

C. Disease
Tuberculosis - 24-28 new cases every year
Ranks 7th in state in number per 10,000 population

D. Accidents - Highest rate of farm and road accidents in North Carolina

E. Armed service rejection - one of top counties in state.
72% of those examined were rejected for either poor health or mental deficiency.

F. Mental retardation - between 20.0 and 29.9 per 100,000. State rate - 14.5

V. Education

A. Years of schooling - median

White	Non-white
7.1	6.5

B. Rate of dropout 65.1% (5th to 12th grade)
33.9% of all 16-17 year olds are not in school

C. Functional illiterates - 25.3%

VI. Agriculture

A. Tenant farming - 59% of all farming activity

B. Percent of seasonal workers among highest in state

C. Land has appreciated 150% since WW II

D. 80% of farming is done by Indians

VII. Industry

A. Number employed
1. Over 500 employees - 1 non-seasonal plant (textiles)
2 seasonal plants (tobacco)
2. Small industrial plants - 28
3. B. F. Goodrich - 1,000 plus

B. Factor of underemployment
Over 45% worked less than 40 weeks in year

VIII. Social Situational Breakdown

A. Number of white males sentenced to state prison - 2nd highest in state

B. Number of Negroes - among top 10 in state

C. One-parent homes

White	Non-white
14.1 percent	24.0 percent

D. Children under 18 not living with both parents

White	Non-white
14.5 percent	30.8 percent